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Who Got Their Way? Advocacy Coalitions and the Irish Climate Change Law

Abstract: Which organisations saw their positions on two contentious issues reflected in the Irish climate law of 2015, and what role did advocacy coalitions play in the policy process? These questions are answered drawing theoretically from the Advocacy Coalition Framework and by conducting a network analysis of survey data collected from the organisations involved in the national climate policy process. The study finds that several institutionally important or economically powerful organisations, particularly those involved in the agricultural sector, as well as the government parties saw their preferences reflected in the law. This resulted in legislation that excluded binding emission reductions targets, differentiating it from similar laws introduced in other European countries. Organisations in favour of stronger regulation formed a coalition to advocate for their positions, but they largely failed to get their way.

Keywords: Climate Change; Ireland; Policy Network Analysis; Advocacy Coalition Framework; Environmental Policy; Policy Process

Introduction

In recent years, several countries have introduced national climate legislation to establish the legal framework for driving a transition to a low carbon future. An analysis of the political contest over such laws can help us understand the dynamics of domestic climate politics and the reasons behind countries' policy choices. Such understanding is important because, even though climate change obligations are agreed in international negotiations, it is within countries where policy pathways are decided.

Researchers have previously explained national environmental policy choices by analysing the preferences of political actors (Hochstetler and Viola, 2012), the emphasis that political parties put on environmental protection (Schulze, 2014), the influence of veto players (Madden, 2014), the role of policy entrepreneurs (Carter and Childs, 2017), experimentation with governance innovations (Matschoss and Repo, 2018), the degree of centralization in national executives (Leinaweaver and Thomson, 2016), the level of political consensus required (Poloni-Staudinger, 2008), and how policy actors can use the resources available to them (Compston, 2009). Here, we draw on ideas from the Advocacy Coalition Framework (ACF) and the field of policy network analysis to investigate how the structure and internal dynamics of the Irish climate change policy network shaped Ireland's national climate law - *The Climate Action and Low Carbon Development Act 2015* (CALCD Act).

We identify two issues that were particularly contentious: the exclusion of greenhouse gas emissions reduction targets, and the composition and independence of the Climate Change Advisory Council (CCA Council). Our objectives are to establish which organisations saw their positions on these issues reflected in the law, and to determine the role advocacy coalitions played in the policy process. The case is particularly interesting because, unlike similar legalisation in other EU countries (UK, Austria, Denmark, Finland and Sweden), the Irish law does not include specific emissions reduction targets. Their omission is significant because Ireland is currently one of the worst performers in the EU (Green Budget Europe, 2016). Indeed, the Irish Environmental Protection Agency projects that the country will not meet its EU 2020 targets (EPA, 2017).

The Fine Gael-Labour coalition government formed in 2011 agreed in principle to introduce climate legislation, but made no promises about its form or content. An environmental coalition pushed for a law that would include emissions reduction targets, but the government rejected the idea. Several organisations that were either institutionally important or economically powerful also opposed targets, with two of the most influential organisations involved in Ireland's agricultural sector among those sharing the government's

position. In addition to binding targets, the environmental coalition lobbied for the establishment of an independent CCA Council. The government initially rejected their proposals, but in the final stage of the law's development granted the Council legal independence. However, the composition of the Council differs from what the environmental coalition had proposed. The law reserves four of the ten places on the Council for the directors or chief executives of The Environmental Protection Agency, the Economic and Social Research Institute, the Sustainable Energy Authority of Ireland and Teagasc (the Agriculture and Food Development Authority). Environmental coalition actors were not convinced that all these organisations were fully independent of both state and stakeholder interests.

The results of this study do not meet the ACF expectation that coalitions play a central role in a policy process. In the Irish climate change policy domain, only one coalition advocated policy positions and it was unable to persuade those with decision-making power to adopt its proposals. Those who did get their way were powerful organisations that did not engage in coalition building. Rather, their positions were reflected in the law because they aligned with the government's preferences. Consequently, we suggest the importance of comparative research that examines the conditions under which advocacy coalitions matter for policy outcomes and the conditions under which they do not.

The Climate Action and Low Carbon Development Act

The debate over a national climate law began just prior to the 2007 general election when Friends of the Earth Ireland proposed that national climate legislation similar to the UK's Climate Change Act be introduced. Their proposal failed to gain enough support to proceed through the legislative process when the Labour Party introduced it in the Seanad (The upper house of the Irish national legislature) later that year. Following the election, the Green Party entered government for the first time, albeit as a minority partner with Fianna Fáil and the Progressive Democrats. They had no plans in their manifesto to introduce climate legislation, but did pledge to reduce emissions by 3 per cent per year. The Green Party significantly strengthened their relative position in the coalition after the vote share won by the government parties at the local elections in 2009 fell dramatically and several independent Teachtaí Dála (TDs - Members of Parliament) withdrew their support for the government. This change enabled the Greens to compel Fianna Fáil to commit to the introduction of climate legislation. In December 2009, the Green Party's John Gormley, who at the time was Minister for the Environment, Heritage and Local Government, published a Framework for Climate Change

Bill 2010 (Department of Environment, Heritage and Local Government, 2010a) and stated his intention to publish a climate bill in 2010. He pursued this objective despite opposition from the Departments of Agriculture and Finance, and the Taoiseach (Prime Minister), as well as some civil servants within the Department of the Environment (Torney, 2017).

In late 2010, the Joint Committee on Climate Change and Energy Security published a report on climate change law (Joint Committee on Climate Change and Energy Security, 2010). The report shaped the content of the Climate Change Response Bill the government produced soon after (Oireachtas, 2010). The bill envisioned an emissions reduction trajectory of 2.5% per year and a cumulative reduction of 80% by 2050, mirroring the target of the UK's Climate Change Act. The proposal included these targets despite intensive lobbying from the Irish Farmers' Association (IFA) and other business interests (Minihan, 2015; Torney, 2017). The bill also included a provision to establish an advisory board similar to the Committee on Climate Change established by the UK's Climate Change Act. The advisory board would have the power to initiate a review of the government's climate policy, including a review of the adequacy of the country's emissions reduction targets.

The Green Party tried and failed to introduce the bill amid the political chaos of the worst economic crisis in the country's history - just weeks after the state received a €67.5 billion bailout from the Troika and the government implemented the most draconian budget in the state's history. The Green Party's fixation on the bill made it appear out of touch with the immediate concerns of the public and went against the preferences of its coalition partners as well as several government departments. The Party subsequently lost all its seats in the February 2011 general election.

The government that formed after the election, made up of the centre-right Fine Gael Party and the centre-left Labour Party, agreed in their Programme for Government to introduce a national climate law (Department of the Taoiseach, 2011). In 2012, a public consultation received over 600 submissions, with over 90% of respondents supporting the inclusion of emission targets and the establishment of an independent expert advisory body (Oireachtas, 2013). In early 2013, the Department of the Environment published the draft heads of a Climate Action and Low Carbon Development Bill (Department of the Environment, Community and Local Government, 2013). The draft did not include emissions reduction targets or provide for an independent advisory body. This was referred to the Joint Oireachtas Committee on the Environment, Culture and the Gaeltacht, which held public hearings and sought submissions from stakeholders, which led the committee to recommend: that the law define 'low carbon';

that it establish an expert advisory body independent of both state and stakeholder interests (Oireachtas, 2013); and that the roles of the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), the Economic and Social Research Institute (ESRI), the Sustainable Energy Authority of Ireland (SEAI), and Teagasc be limited to the provision of technical support.

The Department of the Environment published a revised bill in 2014 (Department of the Environment, Community and Local Government, 2014). The bill did not explicitly state that the Council would be independent and reserved places on the Council for the directors or chief executives of the EPA, the ESRI, the SEAI and Teagasc. The bill did not define low carbon or include emissions reductions targets, despite civil society organisations (Stop Climate Chaos, 2014) and some businesses arguing for their inclusion (Irish Corporate Leaders on Climate Change, 2014). The IFA (2015) and Ibec, Ireland's largest employer organisation (Ibec, 2013), welcomed their exclusion.

The Department of the Environment published an updated draft of the bill in January 2015. Agricultural interests and business groups were broadly satisfied with the bill (Torney, 2017). NGOs and their allies were disappointed and continued to lobby for the inclusion of targets and an independent advisory council. In the summer of 2015, the new Minister for the Environment, Alan Kelly of the Labour Party, responded by granting legal independence to the CCA Council. He also inserted a reference to climate justice in response to NGOs' lobbying, but rejected their calls to include targets. With these modifications, and the possibility that no legislation would be passed before the government's term ended in early 2016, NGOs scaled back their efforts (Torney, 2017). With the 2015 Paris climate conference on the horizon, the passing of climate change legislation offered the Labour Party an opportunity for a legislative victory during a time when they faced widespread protests in opposition to the government's plans to introduce household water charges. The parliament debated the final draft of the Bill in late 2015, and the President signed it into law later that year.

The passing of an overarching national climate law in Ireland was a lengthy process that involved the 2013 bill going through several modifications before its enactment. The result was a law that differed in some significant respects from the UK's Climate Change Act. The CALD Act establishes a CCA Council that is formally independent from government, but will have members from specific state-funded organisations. The most significant difference however is the Irish law's omission of targets. The Irish law also requires that plans and frameworks must be 'at the least cost to the national economy and adopt measures that are cost-effective and do not impose an unreasonable burden on the Exchequer'. The omission of targets

reflects the preferences of the two government parties, which were concerned about how targets might affect their plans to expand agricultural output. They judged that the economic costs of reducing Ireland's relatively high level of agricultural emissions (46.8% of the non-EU Emissions Trading System total in 2015 (EPA, 2016) outweighed the benefits.

Advocacy Coalition Framework

The advocacy coalition framework (ACF) is a belief-orientated approach to analysing the policymaking process that posits that the best way to understand how policy develops is to focus on policy subsystems and the beliefs of the organisations involved in a policy process (Sabatier & Jenkins-Smith 1993). A subsystem is comprised of a set of public and private organisations actively engaged in the debate over a specific policy problem or issue in a geographically defined location. The ACF identifies beliefs as the overarching and most significant factor underpinning the coordinated behaviour of actors participating in a policy process. The ACF assumes policy actors tend to form coalitions with those with whom they share beliefs rather than those with whom they share institutional affiliation. These coalitions consist of actors 'from a variety of positions (elected and agency officials, interest group leaders, researchers) who share a particular belief system - i.e. a set of basic values, causal assumptions, and problem perceptions - and who show a non-trivial degree of coordinated activity over time' (Sabatier 1988: 139). These advocacy coalitions then engage and compete in a policy processes with a view to seeing their policy goals achieved.

Of relevance to the present study are: the ACF's argument that there is an association between the outcome of a policy debate and the policy beliefs of the coalitions that participated in the process; and how the framework defines an advocacy coalition - the presence of coordinated activity and shared beliefs amongst a subset of organisations. Guided by these contentions, we investigate the extent to which the organisations involved in the Irish climate change policy process formed advocacy coalitions. We then examine the beliefs of both individual organisations and the coalitions, with the objective of determining who supported or opposed emission reduction targets and the CCA Council proposed in the 2013 climate bill. This approach enables us to establish which organisations saw their preferences reflected in the law and to explain the role advocacy coalitions played in the policy process.

Data and Methods

We use policy network analysis to identify advocacy coalitions (Henry, 2011; Ingold, 2011; Matti and Sandstrom, 2011; Gronow and Ylä-Anttila, 2016). Policy networks are meso-level social structures consisting of a configuration of social relations between interdependent actors, which form around a particular policy problem or set of policy issues. Conceived in this way, researchers then observe, measure and analyse actors' beliefs and relationships using network analysis methods. Researchers calculate network statistics to gain insights into the roles different actors play, measure how power is distributed, examine how subsets of actors engage with one another, and to determine how actors are organised or integrated into the network. This approach has been taken to analyse international (Hirschi, 2010), national (Ingold & Fischer 2014; Ingold 2011; Yun et al. 2014; Gronow and Ylä-Anttila, 2016) and sub-national (Elgin & Weible 2013; Frank et al. 2012) climate politics.

We collected data through a survey of organisations involved in the Irish climate change policymaking process. We identified the organisations surveyed using a two-stage process. We first analysed multiple documentary sources to identify a list of potential organisations to survey (Oireachtas, 2010; Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government, 2010b; Department of the Environment, Community and Local Government, 2012; Wagner and Payne, 2017). We then consulted four individuals with expertise in different aspects of the national climate policy debate. Each expert identified organisations on the preliminary list that they believed we should survey. We then compared the experts' lists to determine which organisations at least three of the experts identified. This left us with 57 organisations, of which 52 responded to our questionnaire in Autumn 2013. When we contacted organisations, we sought the person responsible for articulating the organisation's climate policy positions (or environmental policy when no person had this responsibility). In organisations without someone specialising in climate or environmental policy, we contacted those as high up the hierarchy as possible. We instructed respondents to indicate their organisation's positions, not their personal opinions. Approximately 30% of respondents completed the questionnaire in the presence of one of the researchers. The remaining respondents completed the questionnaire online or returned it by post.

[Table 1 here]

We collected data on the cooperative behaviour of the organisations in the network by asking respondents: *With which of the listed organisations does your organisation cooperate*

regularly? We used this data to construct an adjacency matrix that corresponds to the network of directed cooperation ties between all the organisations surveyed. Following the approach of Ansell *et al.* (2009) and Gronow and Ylä-Anttila (2016), we used Ucinet's Factions routine to identify the membership of densely connected clusters within the network. Using this routine, the researcher decides in advance the number of clusters into which the actors are separated. In practice, this requires an iterative process whereby several solutions (typically 2, 3, 4 or even more) are tested. A researcher determines the number of clusters present in a network based on their theoretical motivations and the Faction routine's measure for the proportion of correctness, a statistical measure for the goodness of fit.

Our questionnaire presented each respondent with a list of organisations that participated in domestic climate politics in recent years and asked respondents to indicate which of these they believed were *especially influential in domestic climate change politics*. We used these data to calculate a reputational influence score, measured on a scale of 0-1, for each organisation; an organisation scores 1 if it is cited as being influential by every other organisation in the network, and 0 if no organisations cited it as being influential.

We collected data on the policy beliefs of each organisation by asking respondents to indicate on a five-point Likert scale (No, totally reject = 1, Neutral = 3, Strongly agree = 5) their level of support for 21 different climate policies. To calculate the degree to which each actor held pro-mitigation beliefs we summed their responses and normalized their level of agreement on a scale of 0-1. A score of 1 indicates that an actor strongly agreed with all 21 policy proposals, while a score of 0 indicates that they totally rejected all 21 proposals. This metric allows us to determine which organisations share a similar level of support for pro-mitigation policies and to measure the distance between the beliefs of organisations.

We collected from each organisation data about the 2013 draft heads of the climate bill by asking if it supported the exclusion of long-term emissions targets and if it agreed with the CCA Council proposed by the bill. We asked each respondent to indicate on a scale of -100 to +100 their level of agreement or disagreement with the two proposals. A cluster's average score for a proposal is 100 if all organisations in the cluster indicated that they fully supported it, while a score of -100 indicates that they all totally disagreed with it. This metric measures the level of support expressed by each organisation and by each cluster for each proposal. It enables us to identify the clusters with the strongest positions on the two issues and to determine the level of consensus on the issues within each of the clusters.

Analysis and Results

Cooperation clusters

We began by calculating the *clustering coefficient* to measure the extent to which actors in the network cluster together. At 0.47, the coefficient is almost three times the network density of 0.17, providing evidence for the presence of clusters. We then applied Ucinet's Factions algorithm to the network of cooperation ties among all 57 organisations as this allows us to include the five non-respondents for whom we only have data on their incoming ties. We identify three densely connected clusters of organisations and a heterogeneous set of unconnected outsiders.¹ The proportion of correctness for the four-faction solution is 0.787. We reran the routine multiple times to ensure that the placement of actors in each cluster was not random. Cluster density describes the proportion of potential connections in a cluster that are actual connections. The within group densities of the three clusters are 0.44 (Governance), 0.48 (Business, Energy, and Research cluster), and 0.47 (Environmental cluster). The density of the whole network is 0.16, substantially lower than the density of the ties within each of the three clusters. The heterogeneous set of outsider organisations had a within group density of 0, indicating that these organisations did not cooperate with one another.

When we test for the presence of five, six or seven clusters the proportion of correctness increases marginally, but the density of the ties in the additional clusters is less than that of the whole network. Therefore, increasing the number of clusters only serves to create additional sets of heterogeneous unconnected outsiders rather than to identify additional densely connected clusters. Moreover, these additional clusters contain the actors with the fewest cooperation ties with the actors in the three densely connected clusters when the four-faction solution is applied. When we test for the presence of three clusters the proportion of correctness falls because it forces the algorithm to integrate the weakly connected actors into three clusters. The four factions' solution is justifiable because it creates three clusters with a similar density and places the actors with few cooperation ties with the actors in three densely connected clusters into a separate outsider group.

Table 2, below, lists the ten organisations with the highest reputational influence scores in each of the four clusters. Government departments dominate the first cluster, which contains

¹ As a robustness check, we applied a hierarchical clustering algorithm to the data (Ward's method using Manhattan distances). This also generates three clusters. Each contains slightly fewer organisations, but the overwhelming majority of the most influential members in each of the clusters were the same. SEAI is the only influential actor to be assigned to a different cluster, moving from the Business, Energy and Research cluster to the governance cluster.

many of the organisations perceived to be the most influential in the network. The second cluster is more heterogeneous, primarily containing organisations with energy interests but also several research institutions and non-energy related private sector actors. NGOs dominate the third cluster, but it also contains three broadly left of centre political parties. There are no actors in the third cluster among the ten most influential in the network and the average influence score of the organisations in this cluster is considerably lower than that for the first two clusters. In the heterogeneous set of unconnected outsiders, the only actor with a high reputational influential score relative to other organisations in the network is the Irish Farmer's Association (IFA), which, interestingly, is perceived to be more influential than all the political parties as well as all other non-government actors in the network.

Fine Gael, the senior party in government, is also in the set of unconnected actors, but its influence score is relatively low, a surprising result given that one of their most well-known TDs was Minister for the Environment when we conducted the survey. We suspect this finding may have been influenced by the questionnaire wording, which asked respondents to indicate which organisations they believed were influential in climate politics in recent years; Fine Gael had only been in government for 18 months when we started collecting data (following 14 years in opposition). Its low score may also partly be because scoring high on the reputational influence measure is not only correlated with influence over decision-making but also with the extent to which an actor is embedded in a network (Ingold & Leifeld 2016), which Fine Gael is not. That an actor with a low reputational influence score has few network ties is in line with previous research that found a tendency for policy actors to attribute more power to those with whom they collaborate and for actors to collaborate with those they perceive to be influential (Fischer & Sciarini 2015). Fine Gael's lack of cooperation ties may reflect the fact that, as the main party in government, it did not need to engage in coalition building to get its way.

[Table 2 here]

Policy beliefs within clusters

We use the composite scale variable that measures the strength of pro-mitigation beliefs for each organisation (see methods section) to calculate means and standard deviations of the beliefs of organisations in each cluster. This allows us to measure the extent to which organisations within each of the three clusters shared similar policy beliefs. We only analyse the beliefs data for the 52 survey respondents. Three non-respondents are in the heterogeneous

set of unconnected outsiders, one in the Governance cluster and one in the Business, Energy and Research cluster.

The actors in the Governance cluster and in the Business, Energy, and Research cluster expressed almost identical beliefs, in both their strength and their distribution (see means and standard deviations, Table 3). Their beliefs almost fully encapsulate the whole range of positions expressed by all those who answered the questionnaire (Figure 1), providing evidence for the lack of consensus on policy positions within either of these two clusters.

[Table 3 here]

[Figure 1 here]

The organisations in the Business, Energy, and Research cluster have quite different individual objectives, especially with regards to distributional and regulatory burden sharing. For example, ESB is in conflict with commercial rival Airtricity because the former is heavily invested in the generation of electricity using coal, while the latter has invested much more in wind and gas. In the Governance cluster, the two organisations that indicated least support for pro-mitigation beliefs were Teagasc and the Department of Agriculture, both of which are advocates for the agricultural sector. In the same cluster, two scientific organisations, The Earth Institute and the Environmental Protection Agency, expressed substantially greater support for pro-mitigation policies, putting them in conflict with Teagasc and the Department of Agriculture. We therefore find no evidence to support the proposition that either the Governance cluster or the Business, Energy, and Research cluster is organised as an advocacy coalition.

The pro-mitigation beliefs of organisations in the cluster dominated by NGOs were stronger on average than those of actors in the other clusters (Figure 1). The distribution of their beliefs was also half as narrow (Table 3). Their views are therefore distinct from those of the other clusters, and there was more consensus within the cluster about the range of policies they supported. These results provide strong evidence that these organisations form a pro-mitigation environmental advocacy coalition.

The heterogeneous set of actors did not engage in any cooperative behaviour with one another and expressed a wide variety of beliefs (Table 3), and so do not form an advocacy coalition. Fine Gael, the senior party in government, was in this set, but the strength of its beliefs is unknown as it left many of the survey questions unanswered. The Irish Farmer's Association (IFA), the most influential actor in the set, indicated least support for pro-

mitigation policies. Thus the three organisations in the network – the IFA, the Department of Agriculture, and Teagasc – that indicated least support for pro-mitigation policies were heavily involved in agricultural issues, and were also among the ten most influential in the network, as perceived by survey respondents. In response to these findings, we investigated the extent to which the actors most involved in Ireland’s agricultural sector cooperated with one another on climate policy issues. We find no cooperation ties between the IFA and the Department of Agriculture, Teagasc or Bord Bia (The Irish Food Board). The three latter organisations did report cooperating with one another, but they do not form an agricultural coalition separate from the Governance cluster as each has multiple cooperation ties with the actors in that cluster.

Policy beliefs about the Climate Action and Low Carbon Development Bill 2013

We asked each organisation to indicate on a scale of -100 to +100 if they agreed or disagreed with the CCA Council proposed by the bill and if they agreed or disagreed with the inclusion of targets in the bill (see supplementary materials for respondent’s positions on these two issues). We used these data to develop two composite measures (see methods section) for the strength of each cluster’s support for the two proposals (Table 4). We do not calculate a composite measure for the set of heterogeneous actors because six organisations did not answer the climate bill questions.

[Table 4 here]

The responses from the organisations in the Governance cluster indicate that as a group they slightly disagreed with the inclusion of targets and slightly agreed with the proposed CCA Council. Most actors in the cluster indicated a neutral position on both issues, but some organisations took relatively strong positions. For example, Fianna Fáil (the main opposition political party) supported the inclusion of targets, while the Department of the Environment and the National Economic and Social Council (NESC) both strongly opposed their inclusion. It is not surprising that the Department of the Environment supported the 2013 bill as they drafted it. Nor is it surprising that NESC opposed targets, as they had excluded any mention of a need for them in a report they published in 2013 analysing Ireland’s climate change challenges (NESC Secretariat, 2013).

Among the organisations with agricultural interests, the Department of Agriculture (DoA) opposed the inclusion of long-term targets because adhering to them would make it

extremely difficult for Ireland to meet the objectives of Food Harvest 2020 and Food Wise 2025 (the government's strategies to increase the country's agricultural output). The DoA's own research projects that the best-case scenario if these strategies were to be successful would be that the absolute amount of emissions from the agricultural sector would remain about constant - cutting emissions and significantly increasing agricultural output does not seem possible (Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine, 2013). The DoA also supported the inclusion of Teagasc in the CCA Council. The IFA shared the positions of the DoA, opposing emissions targets (Torney, 2017) and welcoming the inclusion of Teagasc on the CCA Council (Irish Farmers' Association, 2015). However, these two organisations did not report collaboratively advocating for their shared positions. Teagasc indicated a neutral position on both targets and the CCA Council, while Bord Bia was neutral on targets but opposed the proposed CCA Council. The differences in the beliefs of the four agricultural organisations on these two issues provide additional evidence that they did not form a separate advocacy coalition. Of the four, the DoA and the IFA were the ones that most clearly got their way with the bill, but this did not happen through building an advocacy coalition or by collaborating with like-minded organisations.

Organisations in the Business, Energy, and Research cluster did not indicate uniform positions on the two statements. The Institute of International and European Affairs supported the inclusion of targets and disagreed with the proposed CCA Council. SEAI strongly agreed with both the proposed CCA Council and the inclusion of targets. Ibec's positions on the two issues were in line with those of the Department of the Environment. Ibec's opinion is important and carries weight because it is Ireland's largest business and employer association, representing the interests of over 7500 private sector organisations, conducting research and lobbying government, policymakers and other stakeholders to shape business conditions and drive economic growth. Ibec also has two committees (the Energy Policy Committee and the Environment Policy Committee) that routinely work with government departments on sustainability-related matters.

Actors in the environmental coalition were almost unanimous in the belief that long-term emissions reduction targets needed to be included in an Irish climate law. The coalition strongly disagreed with the proposed CCA Council (Table 4), the more vocal actors arguing that it should be independent of state and stakeholder interests (Stop Climate Chaos, 2014). The Labour Party, the minor party in government when the data were collected for this research, was the only organisation in the coalition that agreed with the proposed CCA Council and opposed the inclusion of national targets. Its position on targets in 2013 was a significant

departure from its position in 2009, when it published a climate change bill that stated: “*the duty of the Taoiseach [is] to ensure that Ireland’s net carbon account for the year 2050 is at least 80 per cent lower than the 1990 baseline*” (Labour Party, 2009).

Fine Gael never prioritised climate change legislation (Little, 2017). Phil Hogan, the Party’s Minister for the Environment, published a bill in 2013 that did not include targets and envisioned the creation of a climate advisory body that would not be permitted to publish its reports without the government’s consent. Under his direction, the Department of the Environment published revised heads of a bill in 2014. This also omitted targets and excluded any reference to the independence of the Council, illustrating how little Fine Gael’s positions changed in the intervening period. The bill did however propose to increase the Council’s membership from eight to eleven (including the chairperson), thereby reducing the share of *ex officio* members. The party steadfastly maintained its opposition to targets throughout the process (Little, 2017; RTE, 2014).

Discussion and Conclusion

The process that led to the introduction of the *Climate Action and Low Carbon Development Act* saw a particularly contentious debate take place over two issues: emissions reduction targets and the composition and independence of the Climate Change Advisory Council. To understand the factors that shaped how these issues were addressed in the law, we set out to answer two questions: which organisations saw their preferences on these issues reflected in the law, and what role did advocacy coalitions play in the policy process? Our findings offer empirical results to support Flynn’s (2003) description of the Irish environmental policy domain: domestic NGOs are weak, powerful economic actors and government departments dominate the policy process, decisions are largely determined by the Cabinet, and economic issues are prioritised over ecological concerns.

Our analysis shows that actors with strong pro-climate action beliefs formed an advocacy coalition and successfully put and kept on the political agenda the idea of an Irish climate law. Nevertheless, they failed to see their support for emissions reduction targets translated into legislation. Their campaign to persuade the government to establish a climate change advisory council similar to the UK’s Committee on Climate Change was not wholly successful either. The Irish law does establish a legally independent Council, but with an important caveat. Four of the ten members of the Council are directors or chief executives of organisations that actors in the environmental coalition believed were not sufficiently

independent of state and stakeholder interests: the EPA, ESRI, SEAI, and Teagasc. They were particularly concerned about the inclusion of Teagasc, which they argued was too close to agricultural business interests.

The most significant organisations to see their preferences reflected in the law were the two parties in government, Fine Gael and Labour, and the two most influential organisations involved in the agricultural sector, the Department of Agriculture and the Irish Farmer's Association. The government parties' opposition to targets and their decision to exclude them from the law was largely driven by their concern that targets would negatively impact plans to expand the country's agricultural output. The Department of Agriculture and the IFA shared the belief that targets would constrain the agricultural sector. Several other institutionally important and economically powerful organisations also opposed targets (see supplementary materials). Even though these organisations were fewer in number than those supporting targets, they were perceived as being markedly more influential.

The debate over the composition and independence of the CCA Council was less contentious. Fine Gael and the Labour Party both initially agreed with the 2013 bill's proposal, but in the very late stages of the law's development the environmental coalition successfully persuaded the newly instated Labour Party Minister for the Environment to grant the Council legal independence. The Minister rejected the environmental coalition's calls to change the composition of the Council. Most actors that supported the proposed Council were the same as those that that opposed targets (see supplementary materials).

Interestingly, organisations did not get their way by forming advocacy coalitions. The IFA and the Department of Agriculture did not report cooperating with each other on climate policy. There is, of course, the possibility that individuals working for the DoA and the IFA did engage in informal cooperation and communication, even though as organisations they did not report cooperation in our survey. Such informal cooperation could be investigated via in-depth interviews. Other actors involved in the agricultural sector, Teagasc and Bord Bia, reported cooperating with each other and with the Department of Agriculture, but not with the IFA. Teagasc and Bord Bia do not however belong to the group of organisations that got their way as both were neutral on targets. Teagasc was also neutral on the proposed council, while Bord Bia opposed it. It would be difficult to argue, then, that there would have been an agricultural advocacy coalition marked by their shared beliefs and collaboration ties. Rather, whatever influence the IFA and the Department of Agriculture had on the bill was based on other factors. The most likely is that the IFA, the Department of Agriculture and the Fine Gael Minister for Agriculture all supported the expansion of Ireland's agricultural output for

economic reasons. The contextual reason for the success of economic arguments against emission reduction targets was the dire economic situation Ireland experienced during the years when the climate law was developed. Under these conditions, reviving the economy by spurring growth in a sector with significant potential became a desirable option, and the arguments opposing targets in the name of increasing agricultural output for export fell on fertile ground.

Perhaps the most notable limitation of this study is its reliance on cross-sectional data. The most significant consequence of this is that it is not possible to be sure that the clusters and the coalition that we identify accurately capture long-lasting cooperation patterns. Our primary data also does not allow us to determine if any organisations changed their positions on the two issues after the survey was conducted, before the bill was revised or since the law was enacted. We addressed this by providing a qualitative account of any significant changes in the preferences of the most influential actors involved in the process.

In addition to analysing the policy process that led to the establishment of the current Irish climate change legislation, we also contribute to the Advocacy Coalition Framework literature. Much of the literature tends to identify and describe the coalitions in a specific policy domain or to examine whether shared beliefs lead to coordinated action. We go beyond these efforts by analysing the role of advocacy coalitions during the design stage of a specific law's development, by determining which organisations saw their positions reflected in the final piece of legislation and by showing that coalition building was not key to getting one's way. Indeed, this study shows how the formation of a coalition was used as a strategy of the weak, demonstrating that the approach is no guarantee of political success. In particular, when those who form a coalition are competing against those who do not need to because they already hold a significant amount of informal influence and share the interests and preferences of those in political power.

The ACF contends that policy change can occur through four pathways: external subsystem events, internal subsystem dynamics, policy-oriented learning, and cross-coalition policy learning. This study shows how Ireland's domestic climate policy was influenced by an external event, the passing of a climate law in the UK, and how the internal dynamics of the Irish climate policy domain resulted in legislation that differed from the UK law in several ways. The presence of only one advocacy coalition in the network implies that cross-coalition learning could not and did not occur. Instead, the subset of actors that favoured strong climate action learned about the idea of national climate legislation from abroad - a finding that runs

counter to Sabatier and Jenkins-Smith's (1993, p.17) contention that "*policy innovations normally occur first at a subnational level and then may get expanded into nationwide programs*". Thus, future research on the role of advocacy coalitions in national-level policy processes might draw on the policy transfer literature (Dolowitz and Marsh, 2000) to investigate if advocacy coalitions are more likely to be successful at transferring policies when they originate at the subnational level of government than when they come from abroad. Further studies might also consider the circumstances under which cross-coalition learning occurs between coalitions in different countries or between those at different levels of government.

Finally, in light of the finding that coalitions played a minor role in the case examined here, an important question for future research is whether advocacy coalitions have much influence at all in highly centralized Westminster-style parliamentary democracies such as Ireland, where executive power tends to be concentrated in single-party-majority cabinets. Research in the United States, where the ACF was originally developed, has shown that advocacy coalitions are influential in large pluralist multi-level democracies with multiple veto points. In corporatist European democracies such as Sweden or Switzerland, ruling parties need broad support to move forward with a policy idea. Research designs comparing the role of coalitions across these three kinds of political systems could determine whether there are differences in the roles, strategies and the likelihood of success for advocacy coalitions depending on the institutional context. Such comparative research would help establish an understanding of the conditions under which coalitions matter for policy outcomes as well as the conditions under which other factors are more important.

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Table 1 Respondents by Organisation Type

Organisation Type	No. of Organisations	Response Rate
Government Departments, State Agencies, Semi-State Bodies, and Local Authorities	17	82%

Energy	6	100%
Scientific Research	8	100%
NGOs & Advocacy Groups	11	100%
Businesses, Business Interest Groups, Consultancies	9	78%
Agricultural Interests	1	100%
Political Parties	5	100%

Table 2 Most Influential Organisations in each cluster and their reputational influence score

	Governance (Rep. Inf.)	Business, Energy, and Research (Rep. Inf.)	Environmental Coalition (Rep. Inf.)	Heterogeneous Set of Actors (Rep. Inf.)
1.	Dept. of the Environment, Community and Local Government (0.71)	Sustainable Energy Authority of Ireland (0.65)	An Taisce (National Trust for Ireland) (0.33)	Irish Farmers' Association (0.43)
2.	Environmental Protection Agency (0.63)	Ibec (0.41)	Environmental Pillar (0.33)	Byrne Ó Cléirigh (0.20)
3.	Dept. of Communication, Energy and Natural Resources (0.59)	ESRI (Economic and Social Research Institute) (0.37)	Friends of the Earth Ireland (0.27)	Fine Gael (0.18)
4.	Dept. of Agriculture, Food and the Marine (0.53)	Irish Wind Energy Association (0.37)	Trócaire (0.25)	Irish Corporate Leadership on Climate Change (0.18)
5.	Dept. of Finance (0.45)	Commission for Energy Regulation (0.35)	Mary Robinson Foundation (0.22)	Green IFSC (0.16)
6.	National Economic and Social Council (0.45)	Bord na Móna (0.27)	Stop Climate Chaos (0.20)	Irish Academy of Engineering (0.12)
7.	Teagasc (Agriculture and Food Development Authority) (0.43)	IIEA (Institute of International and European Affairs) (0.27)	Green Party (0.18)	Chambers Ireland (.10)
8.	Dept. of Transport, Tourism and Sport (0.33)	EirGrid (0.25)	Birdwatch Ireland (0.16)	National Offshore Wind Energy Association of Ireland (0.10)
9.	Dept. of Taoiseach (0.31)	Bord Gáis Energy (0.24)	Labour Party (0.14)	Office of Public Works (0.08)

10.	Dept. of Jobs, Enterprise and Innovation (0.29)	Coillte (0.22)	Concern (0.14)	Better Environment Nuclear Energy (0.00)
		ESB (Electricity Supply Board) (0.22)	Oxfam (0.14)	

Table 3 Factions

Cluster	Density	Strength of Pro-Mitigation Beliefs (mean and s.d.)
Governance	0.44	0.72 (0.115)
Business, Energy, and Research	0.48	0.73 (0.107)
Environmental Coalition	0.47	0.81 (0.057)
Heterogeneous Set of Actors	0	0.67 (0.14)

Table 4 Positions on targets and the proposed advisory panel (a positive number signifies support for the statement)

Cluster	Inclusion of Targets	Proposed CCA Council
Governance	-12	+14
Business, Energy, and Research	+1	-2
Environmental Coalition	+75	-51

Figure 1: Policy Beliefs (black dots = means; black lines = one standard deviation; red line = network mean)

